



## CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

July 20, 2006

### **S. 2703**

#### **Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King, and Cesar E. Chavez Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006**

*As reported by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary on July 19, 2006*

#### **SUMMARY**

S. 2703 would reauthorize and amend the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Major provisions of the legislation would extend certain expiring provisions of the act for 25 years, expand the use of federal observers at polling sites, and authorize the use of the American Community Survey to identify areas that may need bilingual voting assistance.

CBO estimates that implementing S. 2703 would cost \$1 million in fiscal year 2007 and \$15 million over the 2007-2011 period, subject to the availability of appropriated funds. Enacting the bill would have no impact on direct spending or revenues.

Section 4 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) excludes from the application of the act any legislative provisions that enforce constitutional rights of individuals. CBO has determined that S. 2703 would fall within that exclusion because it would protect the voting rights of minorities and those with limited proficiency in English. Therefore, CBO has not reviewed the bill for mandates.

#### **ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

The estimated budgetary impact of S. 2703 is shown in the following table. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 800 (general government).

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION</b>					
OPM Spending Under Current Law for Voting Rights Program					
Estimated Authorization Level	2	0	0	0	0
Estimated Outlays	2	0	0	0	0
Proposed Changes					
Estimated Authorization Level	1	4	3	3	3
Estimated Outlays	1	4	3	3	3
OPM Spending Under S. 2703 for Voting Rights Program					
Estimated Authorization Level	3	4	3	3	3
Estimated Outlays	3	4	3	3	3

Note: OPM = Office of Personnel Management.

## BASIS OF ESTIMATE

For this estimate, CBO assumes that S. 2703 will be enacted near the end of fiscal year 2006, that the necessary amounts will be appropriated over the 2007-2011 period, and that spending will follow historical spending patterns for the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

The legislation would extend for 25 years certain expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act. Under current law, the Department of Justice (DOJ) certifies the appointment of federal observers to work at polling sites when it has received 20 or more written complaints from residents regarding voting rights violations. OPM, through its Voting Rights Program, works closely with DOJ to assign voting rights observers to locations designated by the department. OPM currently has about 1,000 intermittent employees who serve as neutral monitors at particular polling sites on election days. Since 1966, OPM has deployed 26,000 observers to 22 states.

The legislation would amend current law to authorize the Attorney General to assign federal observers without using the certification process to election sites if he or she has had a reasonable belief that violations of the 14th or 15th amendment have occurred or will occur at a polling site. Based on information from OPM and the current cost of operating the observer program, CBO estimates that the Voting Rights Program would spend about \$4 million in general election years and about \$3 million in other years.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE-SECTOR IMPACT**

Section 4 of UMRA excludes from the application of the act any legislative provisions that enforce constitutional rights of individuals. CBO has determined that S. 2703 would fall within that exclusion because it would protect the voting rights of minorities and those with limited proficiency in English. Therefore, CBO has not reviewed the bill for mandates.

## **PREVIOUS CBO ESTIMATE**

On May 17, 2006, CBO transmitted a cost estimate for H.R. 9, the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006, as ordered reported by the House Committee on the Judiciary on May 10, 2006. The two versions of the bill are similar and CBO's cost estimates for these bills are identical.

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